

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T RANGOON 000594

SIPDIS

FOR EAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/12/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [BM](#) [ASSK](#) [NLD](#)

SUBJECT: NLD SAYS SPDC WON'T BUDGE ON ASSK RELEASE AND  
PREPARES FOR THE WORST

REF: RANGOON 587 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

1. (S) NLD spokesman U Lwin requested a meeting with P/E chief on May 13 and reported that he had met the previous evening with ASSK. He conveyed to ASSK the Embassy's oft-repeated offer to assist her and the NLD in any way possible. ASSK, who was "delighted and very encouraged" by the USG's continuing support, requested that U Lwin share with us the following:

--ASSK has recently held a number of secret, but productive, meetings with SPDC envoys, including Minister of Home Affairs Colonel Tin Hlaing and OCMI deputy chief Major General Kyaw Win, and the regime has agreed with many of the NLD's demands. For example, if the NLD agrees to attend the National Convention, the party will be allowed to choose its own delegates, which could include members who are currently under arrest. The regime has also agreed, in principle, to allow the reopening of NLD offices, but only on a gradual basis and commencing after the conclusion of the Convention.

--On the NLD's most important requirement, the release of ASSK and U Tin Oo, the SPDC refuses to budge. ASSK met with Tin Hlaing and Kyaw Win on May 12 and, according to U Lwin, "she had a very tough time." Although the two envoys have undertaken many recent efforts "to try and please ASSK and the NLD, they were extremely rigid on the issue of releases."

--The NLD will not attend the Convention unless ASSK and U Tin Oo are released. U Lwin allowed that the SPDC might commit to releasing the two after the Convention is over, "but that would be unacceptable." He added that ASSK is not looking out for her own well being, but demands to be released on principle so her party can participate in the Convention process. U Lwin also noted that SPDC envoys have ignored the fate of U Tin Oo in these discussions and focused exclusively on ASSK, a source of irritation to the NLD leaders.

--It is abundantly clear to NLD leaders that on the question of releasing ASSK there is a division within the senior ranks of the SPDC. He described SPDC Chairman Than Shwe as representing "the hard-line" which is worried that ASSK would pursue the May 2003 Depeyin attack with the media were she to be released. U Lwin noted that Home Minister Tin Hlaing represented Than Shwe's rigid stance on ASSK's release, while Kyaw Win (who reports directly to Prime Minister Khin Nyunt) has been somewhat flexible.

--ASSK expects to meet again with SPDC envoys late on the evening of May 13. If the envoys do not have good news on releasing her and U Tin Oo, ASSK will demand a definitive answer from the SPDC no later than Saturday May 15.

2. (S) U Lwin said he "hopes for the best, but expects the worst." He believed that if the regime refuses to release ASSK and U Tin Oo, and the NLD in turn declines to attend the Convention, military intelligence could immediately place members of the NLD CEC back under house arrest. Should this scenario unfold, U Lwin said that he would instruct an intermediary to deliver a statement to the U.S. Embassy and several trusted international media stringers expressing NLD views on the situation. ASSK, he said, suggested that the USG "do whatever it thought was practical with such a statement." U Lwin added that the NLD would welcome any suggestions from the USG on next steps "should this worst case scenario emerge."

3. (S) Comment: NLD leaders have been very cautious in their recent interactions with Emboffs and other diplomatic missions, clearly not wanting to derail ongoing negotiations with the SPDC. However, now that the eleventh hour approaches on the May 17 reconvening of the National Convention, the NLD may soon desire a boost from friends and supporters outside the country--should negotiations collapse and the party's situation deteriorate further. If the SPDC gives in, however, there may be a different outcome altogether.  
Martinez